



Impact Report

CELEBRATING 45 YEARS
FY2021





45 years ago, Eden Autism was founded by parents who dared to dream of a better life for their children. Through determination, preservation, and a compassionate spirit, that early group of parents and staff built an organization that would go on to change the lives of hundreds of people throughout central New Jersey.

Eden was built upon the foundation of doing whatever it takes to support individuals with autism. This foundation not only helped us expand into adult employment and residential services, but it uplifted us through this past year. It goes without saying that the year was

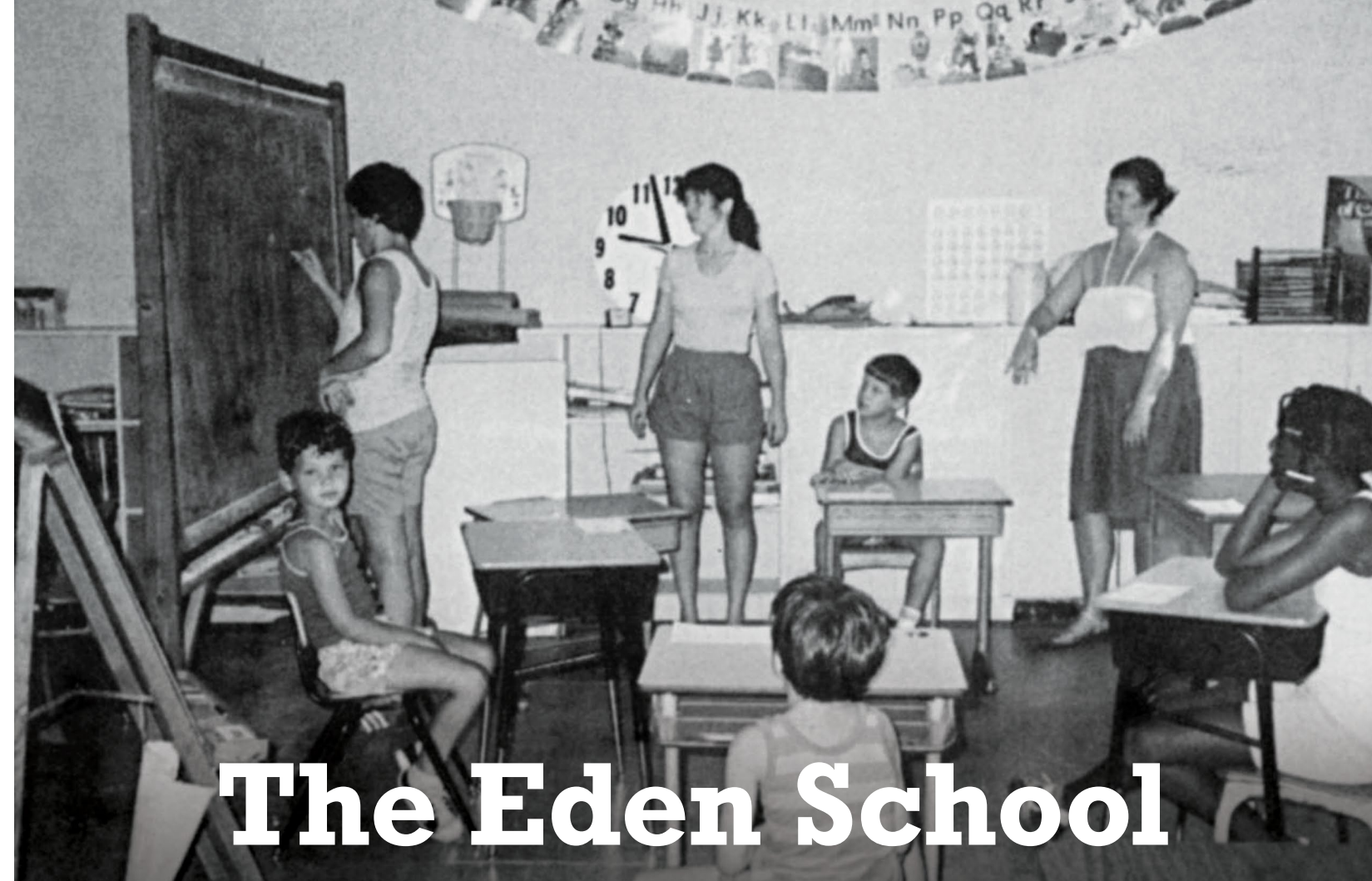
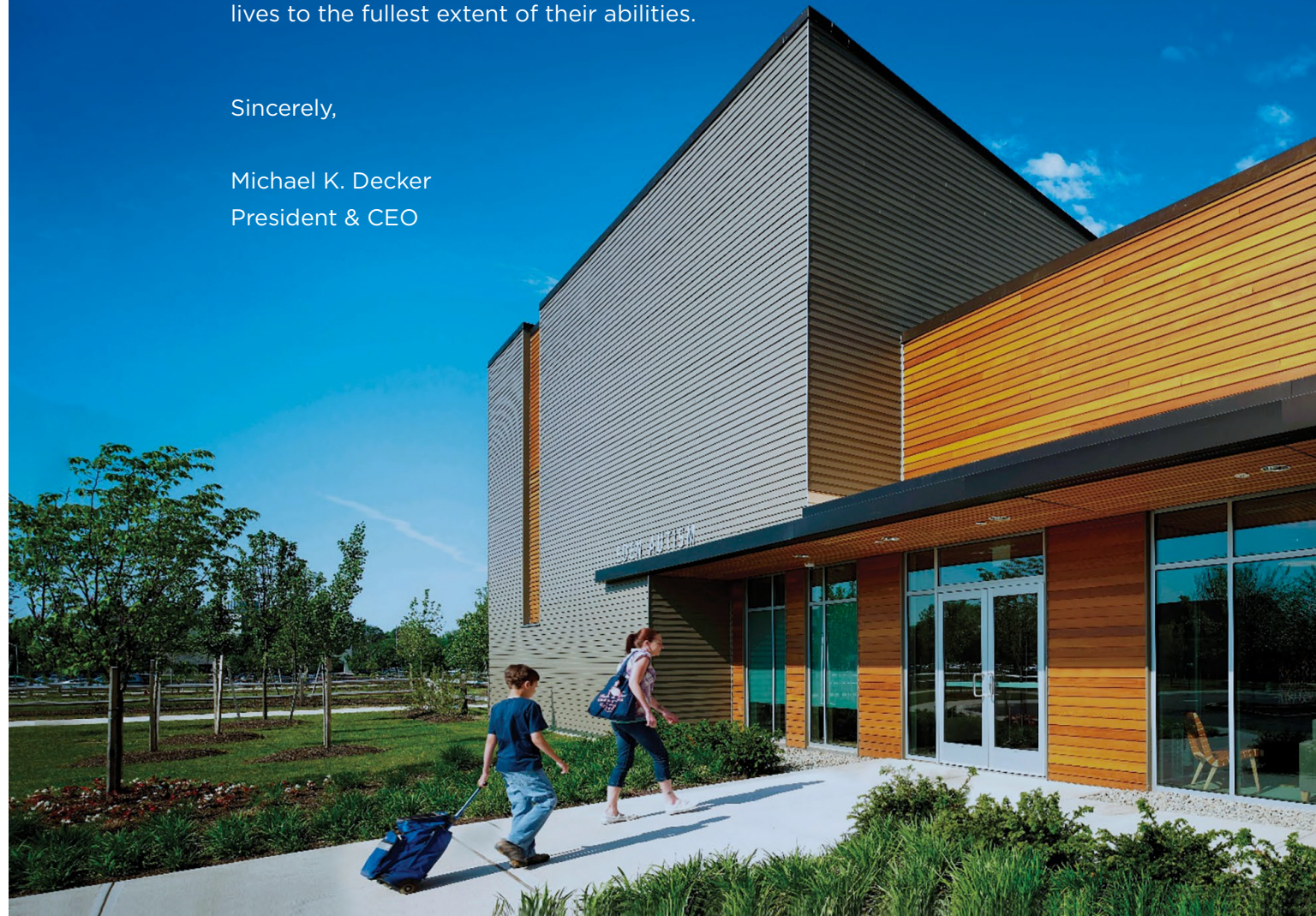
filled with extraordinary challenges, but our staff and families rose above those difficulties with a great sense of commitment and purpose.

Thank you to everyone who supported our mission, especially during this unprecedented time. Without you, we wouldn't be able to carry out our mission to improve the lives of people with autism—one individual at a time, one family at a time, one community at a time.

No matter what uncertainties we may face in the next 45 years, I am certain that Eden will continue to enable individuals with autism to lead fulfilling and engaged lives to the fullest extent of their abilities.

Sincerely,

Michael K. Decker
President & CEO



The Eden School

History

During an era when few had even heard of autism, a small group of parents and staff set out to provide, fund, and advance autism services for their children. In 1975, thanks to the tenacity and determination of these parents and early staff, Eden Autism was born.

Today

In FY21, remaining true to our founding principal of small class sizes and individualized attention, we served 77 students, ranging in ages from 3-21. While the pandemic temporarily suspended in-person services, we worked to safely bring students back to the classroom full-time before the end of the school year.

“

I am proud of how Eden always pulls together. No matter what it is, no matter what it takes, staff are willing to do whatever we can to help the students and families.

-Eden Lead Teacher Ken Dorfman

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Eden Adult Services

History

Understanding a need for services to continue throughout the lifespan, Eden opened their first group home in 1979. Parents spent three years renovating an old farmhouse to turn it into a home. Winsten House was the first of its kind in the state of New Jersey. The home gave individuals with autism a sense of belonging, both at home and in the community.



Today

As of the end of FY2021, Eden operates 26 group homes and apartments throughout central New Jersey, with plans to open four additional residences in FY2022. Our residences serve 106 individuals, providing 24/7 care.

This level of support has perhaps never been as important as during this past year. During the pandemic, staff not only took extra measures to keep participants safe—including extra cleaning and safety precautions—but they adjusted the programs to ensure the men and women we support continued to gain independence at home.

Staff hosted fashion shows, dance party nights, and karaoke sessions for the participants, and some houses started gardening and discovered new areas of local parks and walking trails—all to keep participants active and engaged at home.

“Eden is an amazing organization that is dedicated 150% to the life of an individual with autism, from early childhood through their senior years.”
-Eden Adult Services Parent



Ari at the Princeton University store in 2021 with Area Manager Scott Kent and General Manager Tom Tiberi.

Employment

40 years ago, Ari Shiner made history when he became the first individual with autism to be hired by Wawa. Now, he's making history again as he celebrates 40 years with the company.

Back in 1981, Eden Autism's founding president, Dr. David L. Holmes, along with Joe Bendas and Scott Kent, two Wawa employees representing the Princeton University store and its region, approached Wawa's executive leadership about having an Eden participant work at the store. The executives agreed, and together with Eden created what would become Eden's and Wawa's entry into supported employment—the first of its kind.

Today, Wawa has over 700 associates in the supported employment program—including 21 who are Eden participants.

“
It's hard to overstate our family's appreciation for Eden and for Wawa. Eden and Wawa have done so much to make Ari who he is.
-David Shiner, Ari's brother
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Zachary pictured above with his mom and dad.

Zachary Ryba was the recipient of the 2021 Community STARS Award. The award is presented by NJACP (New Jersey Association of Community Providers) to honor an individual with an intellectual and/or developmental disability for their ability to overcome obstacles and challenges in their daily lives. Zach, a member of Eden's Adult Services Day and Employment Program, received the award for his hard work and determination within the workforce.



“
It is an honor to receive this award and to be recognized for my hard work. I would also like to thank my boss, Don Toner at Sodexo Dining Services at the Pennington School for giving me the opportunity to work at a job that I love. I would also like to thank my job coach at Eden's employment program for providing the skills and training needed to perform my job.
-Zach Ryba
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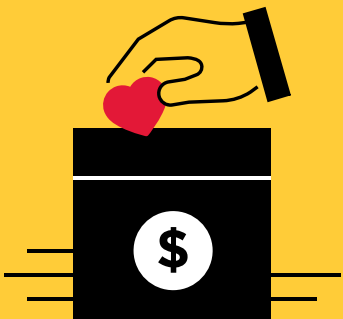
Eden's History in Film



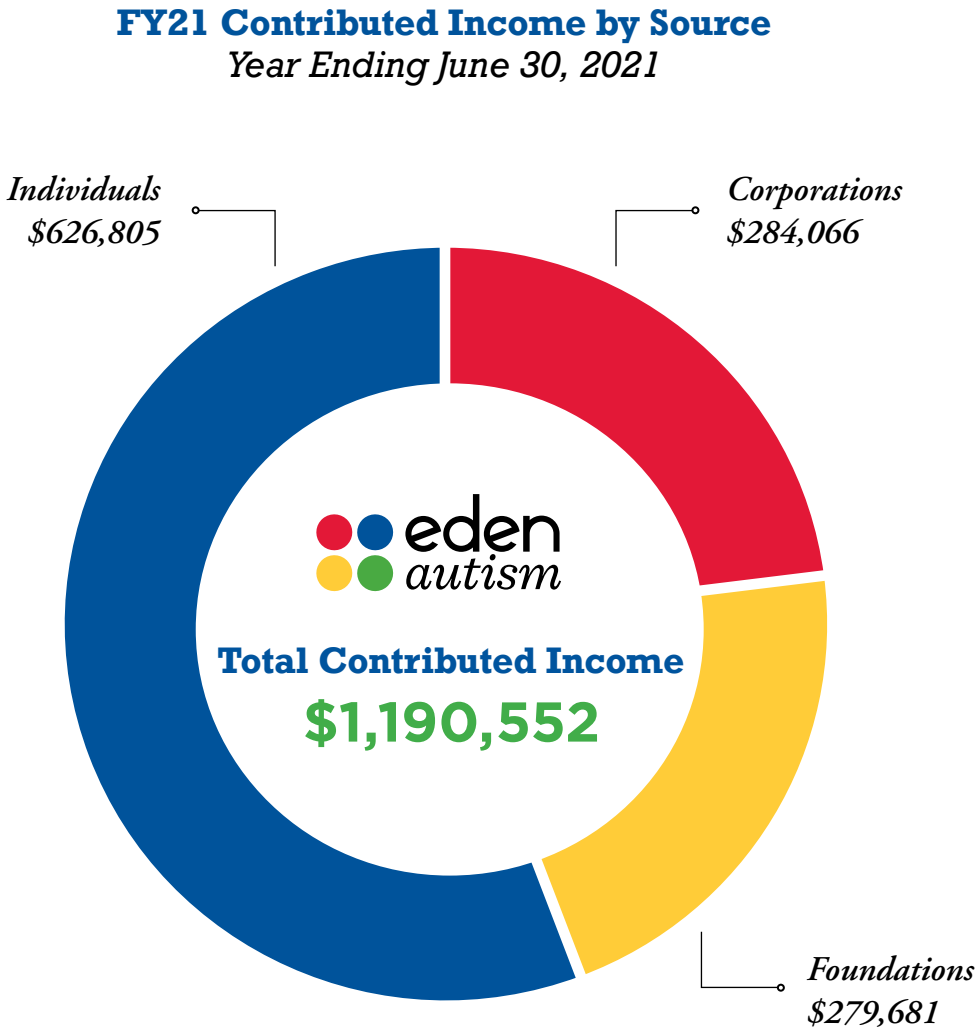
Eden's documentary "Voices: 45 years of family" celebrates Eden's history. To watch the film, visit bit.ly/eden45years



Fundraising Numbers



Eden's Mission
To improve the lives of children and adults with autism and their families by providing a range of community-based services to meet specific needs throughout the lifespan.





From Eden's very first year, friends and neighbors have always been there to support our participants and families. Just as we adjusted how we provide our services during the pandemic, the community found new ways to support us.

The Knights of Columbus Princeton Council No. 636 purchased and delivered meals to all of Eden's 26 group homes and apartments. In one month, they delivered roughly 350 meals from local eateries. Community members participated in virtual events, including our annual 5K & Fun Run/Walk and Eden Dreams gala, to support us from home.

Thank you to everyone who supported Eden throughout our 45 years!





About Autism

Autism is a complex, lifelong developmental disability that affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. Currently, it is estimated that one in every 44 children in the U.S. has been identified with autism spectrum disorder. In New Jersey, it is one in 35.

Considered a "spectrum disorder," the symptoms and behaviors of autism can present in many combinations from mild to severe. The cost to treat and respond to a child's diagnosis of autism is \$60,000 per year on average. Costs over a lifetime can exceed \$2.3 million.

The fastest-growing serious developmental disability in the U.S., the symptoms of autism can be treated, but currently there is no cure.



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